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VIA SUEZ CANAL,
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A very short explanation will show how totally without foundation this impression is. Brandy is really made by the numerous large and small proprietors of vineyards around Cognac, in the Charente Inferieure, who in the first instance make their grapes into wine and as soon as the fermentation has ceased, set to work and distil the wine, the spirit from which is the fine Brandy of Commerce. Immediately after the distillation is completed, the Brandy is purchased in large quantities by the Cognac merchants, who ship it to the various markets for which they have orders. The farmers take their Brandy to market just as farmers here do their corn, and, as a rule, vie with each other in their endeavours to get a name for quality, and each acts on his judgment in selling, some selling at once, some preferring to hold over and sell it when old, and some doing both. A great quantity of each year's produce is purchased in this country and brought over at once, and kept in bond till such time as it is wanted for use. It is a mistake the public make to suppose that because Brandy is bottled in France, and bears this name or that, it is therefore better or older than what respectable merchants sell in England. That which comes in bottle is precisely the same quality of Brandy as that which comes in cask, and, as a rule, it is sent younger and costs more, owing to extra expenses, than what regular merchants in England put up themselves, as they keep it in bond till fully matured. We advise the public to place no confidence whatever on the mere putting up of the article in bottle in France, but to BUY VALUE and NOT NAME.
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AB-O'-TH'-YATE ON LIFE INSURANCE.

(From "Ab-o'-th'-Yate's Life Policy.")

(Continued from our last.)

Here are papers, "said the secretary," handing documents to the applicant, "that require to be filled up by parties who have known you 'ongest, and the most intimately. These you will have to return in a few days. Our medical e aminer will call upon you in the meantime, and report as to the state of your hea.th. We cannot do more at present than simply put this mach nery in motion——"

"What machinery?" exclaimed Ab, jumping up, and looking round, rather alarmedly.

"The necessary inquires only."

"Oh, I see," said Ab, again seating himself. "I thowt ther'd bin some sort o' lumber abeaut for tryin' th' strength o' one's ribs, and I met expect a crack afore I're ready for it."

"We leave all those things to our medical examiner," said the secretary, laughing. "He'll call upon you at your residence."

"I thowt we could ha' sattled it to-day," said Ab, evidently disappointed.

"Oh, no. If Mr. —— had happened to look in, he might have examined you, just to have saved himself the trouble of making a visit; but that would have been all. I do expect him calling. But before proceeding further, I would like to hear your reasons for making this application."

"Well," said Ab, twisting round his hat, as if using it for a turntable upon which to revolve his ideas,—"it's my wife's notion. Hoo's moore sense than I have, an' a better inseet i' things. Hoo's gettin' tired o' owd sick clubs. Hoo says they're rotten, an' no' for t' be depended on. Beside, there's nowt wo'th deein' for. What is seven peaund an' a oak coffin? It'll hardly afford drink for th' buryin.' afther they'n bowt a two-thri dacent rags for mournin'. Then, yo seen, eaur club's gettin' poorer every year. At th' rate it's gooin' on at, if I live till I'm sixty, there winno' be a fart'in' laft for t' bury me with, sayin' nowt abeaut bein' a bit o' summat o'er for th' family. An' when I reckon th' brass it costs me—three an' sixpence a quarter, an' a week's spree after every club neet—I think it's like throwin' booath money an' time away. My wife says insurin' 'll do away wi' o that."

"You are right, sir," said the secretary, with an approving shrug; "and as you have given such good reasons for wishing to insure, you will perhaps state your reasons for giving this office the preference."

"Well," Ab resumed, "it isno' becose I knew so much abeaut these things afore to-day; but I've a friend waitin' eautside, ut towd me this wur th' best shop to come to, as it would be sure brass as soon as I turned up my toes, an' ther mony a shop wheere it wurno' sure. He said yo' had deealin's wi' th' Government an' th' Bank of England; an' I believe in 'em booath. It seaunds like brass i' yo'r packet when yo' name oather on 'em. Beside, he said it would afford a meeans o' keepin' the wife reet; becose, if hoo took it into her yead to leeave me, I could give o'er payin', an' draw eaut one hauve I'd paid; so ut hoo'd be flummaxed."

"Capital!" exclaimed the secretary: "that is quite a sensible view of the matter. Your wife is a far-sighted person; but you appear to see a little farther."

Just then a bell rang, and Mr. Blank, the medical examiner, was announced.

"You'll have an opportunity now of being examined without further delay," said the secretary to Ab, as Mr. Blank entered the room. "Good morning, sir!" to the doctor, who was not the formidable person that Ab had been preparing himself for. "I was just wishing you'd look in, as this gentleman wants to be examined before he goes away."

(To be continued.)

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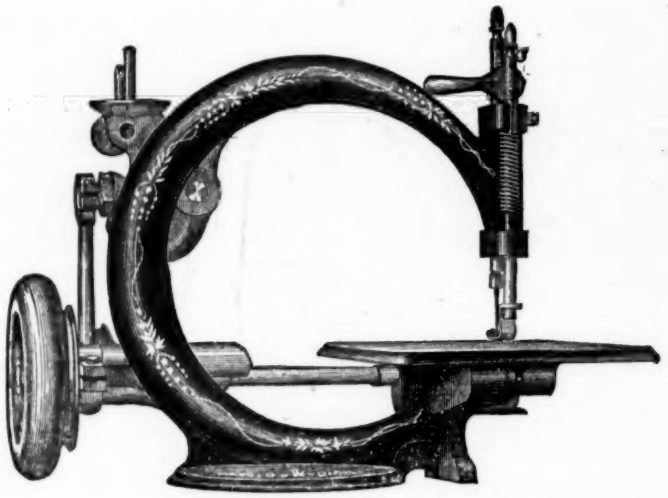

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[A NATURALIST'S NOTE-BOOK.]

OYSTER GOSSIP.

BETWEEN the north-western point of Anglesea and the Island of Walney lies one of the largest bays that wash our shores. The coast line is formed by the union of several counties, as Anglesea, Carnarvon, Denbeighshire, Flint, Cheshire, and Lancashire, which last stretches along its inner or southern end, and enjoys singly a greater extent of seaboard than is possessed collectively by all the other shires we have mentioned. The coast of Lancashire forms an irregular line, deeply indented along its whole extent, from the mouth of the Mersey to the northern extremity of Morecambe Bay, comprising estuaries, bights, creeks, and harbours of all sorts, shapes, and sizes, some capable of holding the grandest argosies that ever crossed the Atlantic or Pacific, whilst others are so shallow as barely to admit the flats that bring us coals, deals, and the like, or carry away agricultural produce to more distant markets. The last report furnished by the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the Sea Fisheries of the United Kingdom contains much interesting matter relative to the productiveness of this portion of our fore-shores. Here, however, we propose to speak rather of what may be, than of what actually is, an important source of industry to our Lancashire fishermen, and shall take the Oyster as the text for the present paper.

Few members of the animal kingdom can boast a larger or closer intimacy with the lords of creation than the oyster. The ancients adored him; the moderns are infatuated about him, and regard his present ailing condition almost as a national calamity. He has gone hand in hand with civilization, has kept the very best society, and is now paying the penalty for his popularity. Like the dinormis of New Zealand, like the bustard of our great inland plains, the intrinsic excellence and helplessness of our soft-hearted mollusc has paved the way to his extermination from many of his old habitats. Who does not remember the time when light carts, owned by itinerant vendors of oysters, were to be seen at commanding corners of our streets? Who has forgotton the gratification of swallowing succulent natives whose flavour had been heightened, or it may be disguised, by a judicious sprinkling from the pepper castor, or a few drops of vinegar from the bottle? What Briton does not regret that their price has reached an almost fabulous limit, and that their place has been usurped by sandy cockles or questionable mussels? Alas that these things should be so! It may be beneath the philosophic dignity of the naturalist to chronicle such events; but to the historian they are of some importance, since they point the moral, if they do not adorn the tale. The fact is, the enormous demand for this fish has led to ruinous over-dredging; the great majority of our deep sea beds are well nigh exhausted, and henceforth we must look to those who are carrying out the modern doctrine of oyster culture for our supply. But on this subject we shall have more to say anon. It is now time to speak of the character and habits of the *Ostrea Edulis*.

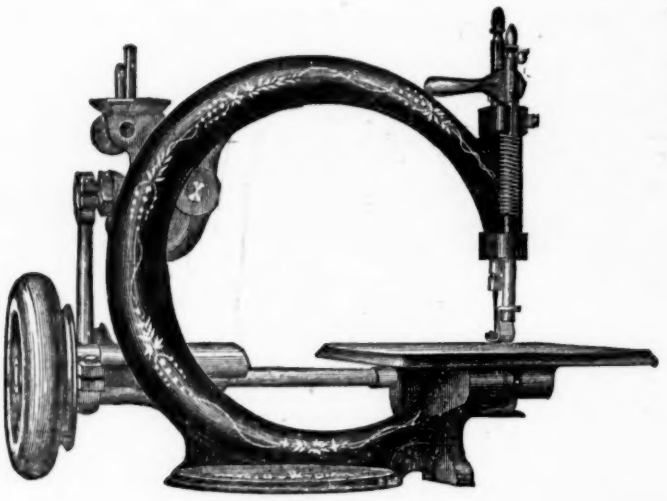
Formed of two unequal valves, and connected by a hinge of the simplest character, the shell of the oyster presents externally a coarse and dirty appearance. This bony covering, however, admirably contrived for the protection of the soft gelatinous mass it contains, is composed of a vast number of laminæ folded irregularly on each other. In some species it is comparatively smooth; in others stratiated, tuberous, or prickly, the lower shell being invariably the deeper. Nothing can be more simple than the formation of the oyster, yet this simplicity suffices for all the purposes of its life and comfort; and like man's higher organization, has been pronounced "very good." No trace of a foot, such as for example exists in the cockle, is to be found. The lungs lie near the fringed edge of the mantle; the abductor muscle is placed in the centre of the body, and round it is the circulating system. The mouth may be seen half hid beneath a kind of hood formed by the edges of the mantle, whilst the beard, performing the office of a hand, grasps its food. But though our mollusc is from inclination a great stay-at-home, he is by no means without the power of locomotion, for recent observation has shown that he can move from place to place by rapidly closing his shells, and thus ejecting the water contained between them, is able to create a force sufficient to row himself backwards in a lateral direction. The principle breeding season of our common oyster is in April and May, at which time the spat is cast. This for about forty-eight hours floats, and resembles very minute specks of grease. After a brief but unascertained period of involuntary wandering, the young fish fastens on some fixed substance as old shells, wood, or the like, and then commences what may be called its normal mode of life. The fecundity of the oyster is very great, the animal laying about a million of eggs.

The cause which so nearly led to the ruin of our natural beds has already been hinted at; but as the same reckless over-fishing which proved so fatal to one branch of our fisheries must, if carried generally into other branches of the trade, become equally injurious to all, it may be useful to follow the subject a little further before we proceed to apply it to our own fat and fertile shores, and in doing this may be excused if we quote from ourselves. "Till within the last few years the increasing scarcity of the oyster was balanced by the greater exertions made for its capture, and supply made a spasmodic attempt to keep pace with the demand. This process, however, could not long continue: indeed, when once the existing stock on the beds was nearly dredged out, every fresh effort only made the final exhaustion more inevitable and complete. We were creating a fictitious income by spending interest and capital together. As might naturally have been expected, this suicidal policy soon brought the fisheries to the brink of actual beggary; and, for the great mass of consumers, the oyster has practically ceased to exist."*

The destruction of our natural beds soon suggested the creation of artificial pares, and in this new field of industry Mr. Cholmondley Pennell, Her Majesty's Inspector of Oyster Fisheries, many years previous to the appointment he now so ably fills, took a prominent part. The idea of Ostraculture was novel in this country. Every stage in its progress was to be learned, and little by little the pioneers in this new and useful science struggled onwards to the light, through doubt, disappointment and loss. Now, however, the artificial culture of this admirable delicacy is well understood. We know where the spat should fall; on what ground the young fish will thrive; and where the adult oyster can best be fattened for market. We have private companies operating at Hayling Island; near Poole in Dorsetshire; in the estuary of the Exe, and at many other points; and lastly one branch of the business was tried on our own shores near Fleetwood.

It is unnecessary here to observe that Ostraculture in its entirety, embraces two objects, viz., the breeding of the young mollusc, and the fattening of the adult fish for the table; and in our opinion these objects should always be united in order to obtain a full measure of success. But at Fleetwood only the latter was attempted. By reference to the last report of the Commissioners for the Sea Fisheries of the United Kingdom we shall see what was done, as well as the opinion entertained as to the prospects of the company, only in its infancy when the commission held its sittings on the Lancashire sea-board. From the evidence it appears that in the year 1864 several cargoes of oysters were laid down in Morecambe Bay about a mile from the shore towards the light-house. That clean shingly ground was selected, whilst the outfall of the Wyre afforded the requisite quantity of brackish water. The extent of ground obtained by the company from the Board of Trade was about five acres, and to stock this it was proposed to lay down about four thousand barrels of the small and delicate "natives" procured from the Arklow banks. Whilst fattening these fish was the primary object of the company, it seems highly probable—if the character of the water and the nature of the ground be taken into consideration—that they will be able to breed their young stock, and we honestly believe it needs but this to crown their enterprise with success. The manager stated before the Board that he expected to make a profit, or, in his own words, "to do that and well, too." If we look further we shall see that this opinion

* *Practical Water Farming.* 8vo. Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas. 1868.



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The destruction of our natural beds soon suggested the creation of artificial pares, and in this new field of industry Mr. Cholmondley Pennell, Her Majesty's Inspector of Oyster Fisheries, many years previous to the appointment he now so ably fills, took a prominent part. The idea of Ostraculture was novel in this country. Every stage in its progress was to be learned, and little by little the pioneers in this new and useful science struggled onwards to the light, through doubt, disappointment and loss. Now, however, the artificial culture of this admirable delicacy is well understood. We know where the spat should fall; on what ground the young fish will thrive; and where the adult oyster can best be fattened for market. We have private companies operating at Hayling Island; near Poole in Dorsetshire; in the estuary of the Exe, and at many other points; and lastly one branch of the business was tried on our own shores near Fleetwood.

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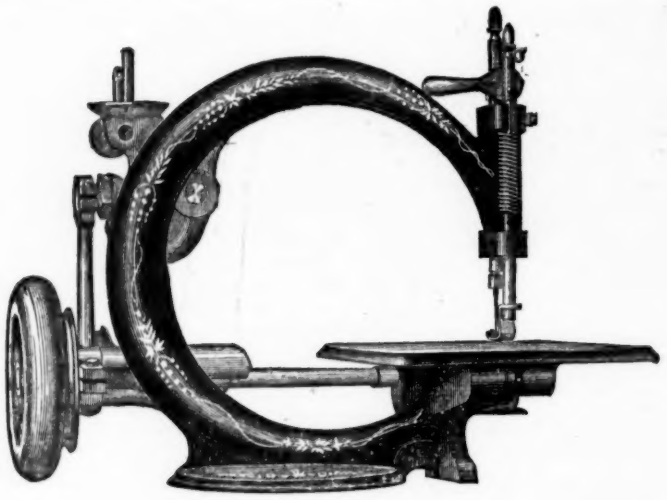

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[A NATURALIST'S NOTE-BOOK.]

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was not expressed without sufficient grounds. Each barrel of oysters contained about 900, the cost of which was six shillings. The same fish, after remaining three or four months in the Bay, were expected to realize in the local markets about tenpence per score, and this, as Mr. Lefevre remarked, "would be a very large profit," more especially if the smallness of the working expenses are taken into consideration. We must observe that the attempt to found an oyster farm in Fleetwood Bay sprung quite as much from a philanthropic as a commercial motive, and that the desire to create work for a maritime population during a period of depression was a prominent part of the scheme. We are not in a position at this moment to show how the enterprize prospered, but that it contained the elements of success appears clear from the evidence given before the Sea Fisheries Commissioners.

If we have shown that one part of Ostriculture—a part by no means the most lucrative—singly contains the elements of a commercial success, how much better might such an undertaking be expected to answer if the more paying branch of the business were carried on conjointly with it. Hatching and preparing for market ought to be inseparably united in the minds of all who embark in Ostraculture. Numerous points on the flat marshy coast of Lancashire are admirably fitted for the formation of breeding tanks such as are at present to be seen at Hayling Island, Exe Bight, and elsewhere, whilst many of the estuaries offer such proportions of shingle, mud, and brackish water, as seem to mark them out especially as pastures on which the young brood might be placed with every chance of doing well.

The intelligent reader will see at a glance that our oyster has been but very lightly handled. In fact, he has been nearly smothered from want of space, is dwarfed of his fair proportions, and has become altogether a poor, insignificant animal. If something has been said scientifically and commercially on so dear a theme, more has been left unsaid. With certain over-fed gourmands our fish is not unfrequently used to whet the appetite. Perhaps the indifferent specimen here offered to our readers may rouse up their intellectual craving, and compel them, like Oliver Twist, to "ask for more."

THE CHRONICLES OF PRESTWICH CHURCH.

PART SECOND.

FOR other than merely etymological reasons it would appear to be not improbable that Prestwich, as an ecclesiastical district, dates its history from some period considerably anterior to the coming of the Conqueror. There were "Thanes" in those days, and we learn from Whittaker, the historian, that the thaneship of Prestwich was vested in the family bearing that patronymic. We are indebted to the same antiquarian for an impression of a seal informing us among other things that a monastery and a church were founded at Prestwich "by the family of Prestwich, thanes of Prestwich, and that their pious gift was dedicated to the honour of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Infant Jesus." There is reason to suppose, however, that the site of this monastery and church was not the same as that which is occupied by the present structure, but a portion of the district of Rooden, or "Rooden Lane,"—that is to say, the lane of the Rood or Cross. A knoll in Heaton Park has gone by the name of "The Roodens" from time immemorial. The etymological evidence, though it does not evidently prove anything in such cases, is at least consistent with pre-Normanism. "Prest-wych," or "Priests' Retreat," smacks very respectably of the pure well of Saxon undefiled.

It is not, however, till we come down to the last quarter of the 13th century, that we have any certain records of Prestwich as a benefice. When Nicholas IV. was Pope of Rome, and Edward I. King of England, it occurred to his Holiness to cause a survey to be made of all the ecclesiastical benefices in this island, with a view to levying upon each a six years' tithe, to defray the cost of King Edward's expedition to the Holy Land. A copy of the return made under the Pope's mandate is now before us. Prestwich figures in it, though not quite as large as life. The tithe assigned to his Majesty amounted, for one year, to £1. 17s. 4d., so that, by compound multiplication, the whole living was worth exactly £18. 13s. 4d. If it were not too much trouble to ascertain the difference in money value between 500 years ago and to-day, we would "do" another little sum, and congratulate the Rev. Canon Birch on the "remainder."

Fifty years later than the pontificate of Nicholas IV., that is in 1313, we find the church and monastery of Prestwich still in connection with the Prestwich family. In that year, "to wit, in the 14th year of the royalty of John of Gaunt," there was a law trial at Lancaster, in which Adam de Prestwich appears as querent, and Thomas Wolverly, as deforcient. From this period the property passed into the possession of the Radcliffes and the Longleys, with whom the patronage continued till 1561. Prior, however, to that date, viz., in 1535, there was another general valuation of church property, preparatory to King Hal's dissolving the monasteries. Prestwich, as a living, had by that time more than doubled in value, the return being now fixed at the magnificent sum of £46. 4s. 9½d. We also learn from these returns (which were published by the Commissioners of Public Records between 1810 and 1834) the exact proportions of property upon which the then rectory was passing rich on forty odd pounds for that particular year. The glebe is returned at £5. 2s. 7d.; the corn, at £24. 5s. 9d.; calves, at 15s. 8d.; lambs and wool, at £4. 15s.; pigs, at 10s.; Easter offerings, £11. 1s.; and "mortuaries (that is to say, tithes not paid during the testator's lifetime, but bequeathed in his will as 'conscience money')," 10s. So much for the value of the living at the time of the Reformation; and it should be borne in mind that at that epoch, the original church and monastery of the Saxon period had been replaced for nearly a century (the present structure bears date 1450) by the parish church of Prestwich. The new order of things necessitated a change in the service, by the abolition of the chantry, or chapel, for "ye maintenance of ye priest who shall daily say mass for ye souls of ye founders." By the way, we have no direct evidence of this change, but the indirect evidence is, in this instance, every whit as conclusive.

During the succeeding reign of Queen Mary, we find that one of her Catholic Majesty's first acts was to order the re-establishment of all the chantries in Lancashire; and she conferred on the chantry priests stipends varying from £1 to £5 a year. The number of chantries thus re-instituted in this county was 29—and Prestwich was one of them. We have also evidence that, at this interesting period of ecclesiastical history, Prestwich was associated with the name of John Bradford. At Prestwich, as well as elsewhere, the martyr did not shrink from bidding for a stake at Smithfield, by denouncing the attempt to bring England again under Popish subjection. In the M.S. of Immanuel College is a letter written by one Elizabeth Longsho to John Bradford, in which she mentions the martyr's preaching at Eccles, Ashton, and Flixton, and concludes by desiring him "to have remembrance in his prayers of a maide in ye parish of Prestige, whose name is Alice Seddon, who does not cease to pray for you night nor day."

But if Prestwich was anti-papal it was no less anti-puritan. During the Great Rebellion, the Presbyterians instituted a system of "Classical Assemblies," consisting of delegates sent from every congregation, whose function it was to replace Episcopacy in the overseeing of parishes. In 1646 there were nine of these Presbyteries established in the county of Lancaster, and Prestwich, together with several neighbouring towns, formed one of the divisions. The parishioners, however, were in the main, staunchly orthodox. They protested against the discontinuance of the Burial Service of the Church of England; they protested against the doing away with the baptismal sign of the cross; and the abolition of the marriage ring was an abomination as great as publishing the banns in the market-place instead of in the church. Feeling ran so high that "clandestine marriages" were made "in ye night tyme," and funerals were celebrated "after sunset," and children were baptized "in ye houses of ye parents," in accordance with the services in the Prayer Book. The officiating minister (not an ordained clergyman) was the schoolmaster of the parish. We are not aware that the present rector claims him as a progenitor, but his name figures in the church records as "Mr. Birch." He was inhibited by the Presbytery, and between then and the Restoration the Prestwich folk were christened, married, and buried in such fashion as the destinies decreed. We should imagine that few baptismal registries of that period contained so singular a collection of "Christian names." Read these as a sample:—"Pharaoh, Hamlet, River Jordan, Radcliffe Bridge, Eve, Tabby, Minerva, Stirrup, Calvin, Lais, Pleasant Elizabeth, Stand-even, Ship-'o-botham, Delicate, Sweet-love, Silence, Eusebius, Handel, Love, Maybud, Squire, Major, Kettle,

BRITISH MUSEUM

Shirt, Final, Posey, Beneventus, Indiana, Charity, Sidonia, Zeno, Eden, Marah, Venus, Plenty, Ludd, Temperance, Mercy, Swithen, and 'Siah (abbreviation for Josiah.)"

The following items, culled from the Churchwardens' accounts, will be found to throw a curious light upon the small parochial affairs of the 17th and 18th centuries :—Doles for the poore at both Heatons at ye funerall (1656) of my Ladie Stanley, 3s. 9d. ; paid for meaimed soulders, 2s. ; paid to Dennis wife and a lame wench, 10d. ; received from Humphery Chetham for the poore, £3. 18s. 9d. ; paid to littel Besse, 14d. ; charges about a childe left in the lane in our town, 7s. 8d. ; paid for a surplis, £3. 10s. ; paid to short Mary, 2d. ; to George Miln Son mossinge the church, £1. 6s. 8d. ; pd ffor a peare of cloggs for Allin child, 3d. ; paid to a midwife ffor Ann Hilton, 1s. ; paid for providing a godfather, 1s. ; paid to Robin Lever, the parretor, 1s. ; received from Mr. Foefield ffor a fine ffor burynge his wife in linnen, £2. 10s. ; paid to Ann Stock for windinge James Ogden, £00. 00s. 4d., and £00. 00s. 2d., to the good man ; paid to James Joanes by justice order, who was biten with a mad doge, 16s. 6d. ; paid to a creple brought of a barrow, 3d. ; paid for 7 brass candlesticks and going about them to Wiggen, £1. 7s. 0d. ; paid to Jackey Leach for beautifying ye church and kinges arms and writing i'th church, £4. 10s. ; paid for booke and regulations about infected cattle (1747), 8d. ; paid for spurring booke [banns book], 8d. ; paid for new hearse, £10. 10s., and for black and white bobbs [plumes], £6. 19s. 6d.

NURSERY RHYMES.

LAY SERMONS FOR LITTLE PARSONS.

BROAD CHURCH.

There once was a Bishop so broad,
The zealots he quickly up chaw'd,
His name it was Fraser,
And with his keen razor
He cut up cant, humbug, and fraud.

OLD CHURCH.

There once was a Dean of good sense
(We might as well use present tense),
He thought, as it stood,
His Church was so good,
That he who denied it was dense.

LOW CHURCH.

There once was a Rector so narrow,
His notions our feelings did harrow,
This well-meaning man,
At the shrine of Saint Ann,
Fought like a belligerent sparrow.

HIGH CHURCH.

There was a poor Curate ; but, zounds !
He was hard to keep quite within bounds ;
Saint Alban's, they say,
Is as good as a play—
'Mong the poor he goes daily his rounds.

IRISH.

The Rivrend O'Bryan Potato,
Though he hasn't the wisdom of Plato,
Still can preach in a stoyle,
While it raises a smoile,
Yet fills, in his church, every sate O,

COZY CHURCH.

There *is* our own Parson so jolly,
Can shake you with laughter—so droll he ;
He's an old-fashion'd sort,
Likes a glass of good port—
To tell you his name would be folly.

MORAL.

Your wide, all-embracing communion,
Disfavours discord and disunion ;
Go your several ways,
To the end of your days,
Uniformity would not be union.

THE KING DICK ALPHABET.

A was an Archer, who played in King Dick,
B Mr. Belton, who spoke rather thick ;
C was C. Calvert, so measured and slow.
D was King Dickon, who caus'd so much woe,
E Edward Fifth, who died by foul means,
F fair Miss Edmundson, still in her teens ;
G stands for Glo'ster, who wrought so much evil,
H Henry Sixth, whom he sent to the —— ;
I the young prince's Interment by night,
J Jockey of Norfolk was slain in the fight ;
K was King Calvert, who mounted a horse,
L Lady Anne, whom he soon made a corse ;
M was Queen Marg'ret, who scolded and cuss'd,
N were the Nobles, whom Dickon ho-cussed.
O was Old London, profusely display'd,
P was the "Prince's," where *Richard* was play'd ;
Q was the Quarrel 'twixt Bucks and King Dick,
R stands for Richmond, who finish'd him slick ;
S was Lord Stanley, by whom Dickon was sold,
T was base Tyrrell, who murder'd for gold ;
U Uncle Glo'ster, who prompted the deed,
V were the Villains, whom Tyrrell had fee'd ;
W the Widows, who tearfully spake,
X the Xantippe Miss Seaman did make ;
Y little York, well play'd by Miss Bruce,
Z the fierce Zeal sent King Dick to the deuce.

BELL, 'BUS, AND BUZZER.

THE distracted people of Springfield, Massachusetts, have started an Anti-gong—or—Bell-ringing—and—Steam-whistle Society. Such is the announcement which has appeared in the American newspapers, and we must say that we heartily sympathize with the distracted inhabitants of Springfield. If we live in an age when we are not likely to suffer the penalties of excommunication by "bell, book, and candle," we are at least exposed to all the torments of bell, 'bus, and buzzer. Judging from that medium of communication between private individuals and the public—the correspondence column of the daily press—it would appear that the minds of the citizens of Manchester have latterly been severely exercised upon the matter of bell-ringing, of omnibus traffic, and of American "devils," or buzzers, as they are familiarly termed. Upon the nuisance or bell-ringing and the enormity of the traffic in Market Street, which is a disgrace to any civilized town, we have already descanted more than once. At the risk of being accused of "iteration," with the usual expletive in front of that word, we are constrained to return to these subjects. As perpetual dropping of water will wear away a stone, so we live in hopes that incessant harping upon public grievances may make some impression upon the adamantine hearts of the municipal authorities.

Some time since we entered into the details of Sunday bell-ringing and its abuses. We urged the propriety of abating the nuisance which, carried on as it now is, produces the saddest effects upon sick and delicate people suffering from nervous complaints, diseases which prevail in a busy city like Manchester to an alarming extent. We repeat what we previously said, that there is not the slightest occasion for church bells to be rung for half an hour before Divine Service commences. Five minutes' duration of ringing would be amply sufficient. People are not guided as to the time for going to church in a large town by the bells at all. As things are at present, the only portion of Sunday which delicate people, invalids, and others who are necessarily prevented from going to church, have left in peace and quietness is during church hours. Throughout the whole day, at other times, the air is full of the most

discordant clangour of bells, fusillades of abominable tinkling school bells, and dismal "big Bens," and great "Toms of Lincoln," driving those who live in their vicinity distracted, like the good folks of Springfield, Massachusetts. We are inclined to think the adherence to this ridiculous custom is due in a great measure to superstition, and that the old idea that church bells were necessary to frighten devils and evil spirits away from the last resting-place of the dead, has not yet exploded. At all events, experience proves to us that the abuse of bell-ringing as it now exists, is a powerful instrument and agency in providing constant employment to the gravedigger and sexton. Alexander Selkirk longed for the sound of the church-going bell to break the monotony of his solitude, but there are hundreds of peaceful citizens whose ears are deafened, and throbbing temples chafed, by the intolerable clamour and infernal din of the Sunday bells, who would gladly change the *un*rest of a Manchester Sabbath for the repose and quietness of Robinson Crusoe's island. Robust people who enjoy rude health, and happily do not know what nerves are, will, as a matter of course, laugh at our remonstrances. Happy individuals! They know not the miseries of sleeplessness, neuralgia, tic-doloreux, headaches, and other ills that flesh is heir to. Like people who are blessed with the digestive powers of the ostrich, they gibe at their weaker brethren who declare their inability to digest tenpenny nails.

A few weeks since we commented upon the traffic in Market Street, and argued that the omnibuses should be prohibited from traversing that thoroughfare. The nuisance goes on increasing, and on a fine Saturday at noon the street is all but impassable. We have a great respect for the Chief Magistrate of this city, and should regret extremely if anything occurred to injure his person, but as the Mayor usually crosses Market Street about one o'clock on Saturdays in his brougham, we confess that we should take a malicious pleasure in seeing the panels of his carriage smashed by the pole of an omnibus or a cab-shaft, an accident which occurred in the same street not so long since. If the worthy Mayor got a good fright, and could arrange to have the Town Clerk along with him at the time, perhaps some action might be taken to mitigate the horrors of Market Street.

The "American devil" has filled the correspondence columns of the daily papers for some weeks past. The "Buzzer" is all very well in the boundless prairies and pathless forests of America, or in the vast steppes of Russia. On the Ohio and Mississippi the buzzer booms forth his approach to solitary stations, and calls the people at work on the plantations to come and supply fuel and other necessaries to the huge floating castles which pass up and down the stream for over a thousand miles. In the centre of a large town the buzzer is indeed a devil, and the sooner he is kicked into another place the better.

TOWN TALK,

AND THINGS IN GENERAL.

THE HEYWOOD PRIZE PICTURE.

THE Heywood Prize at the Royal Institution—this year reduced from £50 to £25—has been awarded to M. Lecadre for his picture, Le Reveil. Last year, as most of our readers will remember, the award to Mr. Keeley Halswelle, for his Roba di Roma, gave rise to considerable public discussion among artists and others; and we ourselves were the first to call in question its fairness. Now, however, we cannot find any reason to complain of the justice of the decision given by the Council of the Royal Institution, though it is quite possible that some people will be dissatisfied, on the ground that the work in question is a study rather than a picture, and no doubt there is some truth in that view. The motive for painting the picture was evidently nothing more than the nude figure; but as we said in our notes on the Exhibition, the composition of form and colour is such as to raise it above the level of a mere figure study, and for what it is, it is the most complete work in the Exhibition. There is nothing in it scamped or unsatisfactory, but at the same time it is not by any means a noble work, either from the point of view of decoration or poetry. This year, we understand, the Council called to their aid the advice of Mr. Keeling, before coming to any decision; and the advantage of professional opinion in cases of this kind is shown; for whatever may be said of M. Lacadre's picture, as to the intention and choice of subject, there can hardly be two opinions about its executive merits.

THE SECTS AND THE SCHOOL BOARD.

The best places in the advertising columns of the daily papers are at present given up to the appeals of the various candidates at this election. It is a fact to be remarked, that many of the candidates make their appearance before the constituency in a theological character. Considering that this Education Act is supposed to be an entirely unsectarian measure, this position of affairs is anomalous: but when it is considered that practically the sectarian or unsectarian character of the schools established by the school board will depend upon the board now about to be elected, the proceedings of the various candidates are ominous. It is significant of the manner in which they are about to act according to the spirit of the statute, that the very first thing they do is of an essentially sectarian character. It is no use cherishing false hopes about this educational measure. We may as well make up our minds to the prospect of this unsectarian bill being made into a bone of the most purely sectarian contention, and of every sect that there is continually endeavouring to put its own colouring on the education given. Unless the boards contain a counterbalancing property, the unsectarian clause in the Education Act will become the deadest of dead letters. It is hopeless to wish for an unsectarian board. All that can be hoped for to any purpose is a board in which the sects may be pretty evenly balanced, and thereby neutralized. The bullying attitude assumed by the stronger denominations, therefore, compels the little sects to look after themselves and no one else. So that the indecent greediness of bodies like the Education Union has brought affairs to this paradoxical pass: it has become necessary for those small denominations who desire an unsectarian board, to vote in a sectarian interest.

SALFORD SESSIONS.

At a special conference of the representatives of the Manchester and Salford Temperance Union and its Branch Societies, held at the Grosvenor Street Temperance Hall, Chorlton-upon-Medlock, Manchester, on Saturday last, the following resolution was unanimously adopted, and ordered to be sent to the Home Secretary:—"Resolved,—that this Conference has seen, with feelings scarcely to be described, the unpatriotic and reprehensible conduct of certain magistrates at the recent Quarter Sessions for the Salford Hundred, where the licenses of several disorderly houses, after having been refused at Brewster Sessions, have, on appeal, been granted by the higher court. That the attention of the public, of Parliament, and of the Government, be called to these disgraceful proceedings." This is a red-hot cannon-ball, indeed. And yet, so callous is humanity, we shouldn't wonder but what Salford Sessions will have the presumption to be held, when next their time comes, just as if nothing had happened.

"THE WIFE" AT THE PRINCE'S THEATRE.

A mutilated version of Sheridan Knowles's play, *The Wife*, was produced at this theatre on Monday evening, the two principal characters being undertaken by Mr. Swinbourne and Mrs. Calvert. Mr. Swinbourne, long and favourably known as the leading actor at the Theatre Royal, is a thoughtful, judicious performer, who, if he does not startle an audience by sudden flashes of genius, never degenerates into either rant or dulness. His method is good, and there is a sort of rugged picturesqueness about his style which is exactly appropriate to the part of Julian St. Pierre. The lines descriptive of his native Switzerland were delivered with much feeling. He is a sound, careful actor, and his elocution, although now and then with a tendency to turgidity, is, on the whole, correct. In such characters as St. Pierre, Ingomar, and Claude Melnotte, Mr. Swinbourne is seen at his best. It affords us pleasure to say that Mrs. Calvert's Mariana was a very satisfactory performance. In such characters, where womanly tenderness is the prominent feature, Mrs. Calvert is very efficient. With regard to the other characters, we have scarcely patience to speak. There is not a single actor in the company, with the two exceptions to whom we have alluded, who can recite blank verse. Sheridan Knowles's somewhat stilted versification consequently sounded ridiculous in the mouths of actors who appeared to be bent upon murdering their parts. The play-bill was a complete jumble. The second character

in the play, Leonardo Gonzago, put down in the bill as performed by Mr. Haywell, was played by an actor whose name was not in the bill at all, while Ferrardo Gonzago, allotted according to that authority to Mr. Maynard, was played by Mr. Haywell, who spoke throughout the performance as if he was an inveterate snuff-taker. Mr. Maynard, instead of playing Ferrardo Gonzago, appeared as the Father Confessor. Nevertheless, an evening contemporary remarks that "Mr. Haywell and Mr. Maynard were all that could be desired as the two Gonzagos!" The inevitable Mr. Bracewell, who last week played second characters to Mr. J. L. Toole, turned up in a part of some importance, with what result may be imagined; and another actor read his part from a sheet of paper. The normal condition of the company at the Prince's Theatre is one of weakness; but we have never seen it in such a deplorable condition as it is at present. We understand that a portion of the company is at Glasgow, playing with Mr. Compton, in *Handsome Is That Handsome Does*—a play which belongs to the proprietors of the Prince's. We can only hint to the management that, while they were about it, it would have been no loss to the public if they had removed the entire company to Scotland. It is by no means pleasant to pass such strictures upon Mr. Calvert's management; but truth compels us to speak out. If the Emperor is away from the seat of government, the Empress Regent is still in Oxford Street; and that lady is quite capable of seeing that plays are efficiently performed.

MUNICIPAL BILLIARDS.

Passing down King Street, with our friend Horatio, the other day, we were attracted towards those boards affixed to the Town Hall whereon "Jos. Heron" usually fulminates, by the announcement of a billiard tournament. Our first idea was that Mr. Councillor Ashton's revolutionary project of abolishing the mayoral dinners had been carried out, and that this was a new form of entertainment with which the mayor was celebrating his election. We soon perceived, however, that was not the case; and it was when we discovered that the principal building of Manchester had been let to a parcel of billiard players that we made to our friend that remark about "base uses," which the Prince of Denmark made to his friend on a previous occasion. Is the good city of Manchester in so abject a financial state that it is reduced to the necessity of picking up a few pounds by letting out its principal building for such purposes as these? At least, we must protest against its suffering its notice-boards to be converted into advertising hoardings. We should not be best pleased to have our steps arrested by being earnestly requested to

Remark how admirably Keighly suits
Sir Joseph Heron with his patent boots.

Even His Worship's tradesman may declare:—

The elegance, combined with ease,
Which in the Mayor's best hat one sees,
Proclaim aloud it came from Gee's.

A NEW SOURCE OF GRIEF.

We have before remarked how few people know how to express themselves. The *Guardian* of Wednesday presents a curious instance of this. A correspondent, disclosing a scandalous state of things at Pilkington Church, tells how a funeral was recently prevented from being solemnised by reason of the incapacity of the sexton and the inadequacy of his preparations. And he incidentally remarks how grieved the mourners were not to be able to put the coffin of their friend to the bottom of the grave! The correspondent's sentiments are excellent, but his mode of expressing them is calculated to move smiles rather than tears.

THE SCOTTISH FIDDLE.

On the announcement of the intended marriage between the Princess Louise and the Marquis of Lorne, we ventured to surmise that, when the day for celebrating the auspicious event arrived, the Highlanders of Argyleshire and Aberdeenshire would become considerably excited. We were not, however, prepared for such a sudden outbreak of the national complaint as that which has already occurred. "The clans they are gathering, gathering, gathering, and the banners they are flying, flying, flying," with a vengeance. Of all men in the world our old friend Dr. Norman Macleod, of the Barony Church, Glasgow, boon companion, genial sort of Presbyterian Friar Tuck, and editor of *Good Words* withal, has fallen a victim to the irritating epidemic. At a dinner, or perhaps we should say *after* a dinner, at which Lord Lorne presided the other day, Dr. Macleod, in the course of a speech which he made, aired his Scotch "wut" by remarking that if he had been the Marquis of Lorne, instead of being the minister of the Barony Church, he should certainly have "asked" the Princess Louise himself. Some one has since given the reverend doctor an unkindly cut for his condescension, by hinting that it was possible that should such a contingency as his proposal, or as he termed it his "asking," have occurred, it was just possible that it might have been met by a flat refusal and the way shown to the door. Verily, it is time that another post should be erected, and divine blessings invoked upon the Duke of Argyll. Hitherto Dr. Macleod has insisted, upon all occasions, that the bagpipe was the most musical instrument in existence. It is, however, now evident that he has caught the infection of the fiddle. Next time that he preaches before the Court, at the parish church of Crathie, we should recommend him to take for his text the words regarding Isaac—"And he lifted up his eyes, and behold the Camels were coming."

MARRIED WOMEN IN MILLS.

On the occasion of his visit to the Greengate Day Nursery, the Bishop of Manchester, hit, in his peculiarly happy manner, on one of the worst features connected with our Factory system, viz., the employment of married women in mills, or indeed in any kind of labour save "looking well into the ways of her household." The bishop said he had received a letter from a Dewsbury gentleman, in which almost one and all our present social evils were traced up to this source. Husbands became drunkards, boys became unruly, and girls fell into evil ways, all through the absence of motherly home influence. If these statements could be proved, the bishop thought we ought to be very careful how far we facilitated such employment of women. By working in a mill a woman is able to add some twelve shillings a week to the household funds, but we question very much whether this is not "penny-wise and pound-foolish" in the long run. A dirty home, puny, sickly children, always ailing, wild girls, and a driven-to-the-beer-house husband, far outweigh any advantages an additional twelve shillings can purchase. It is rather remarkable that working men themselves are beginning to look at this question in the bishop's light. At a meeting of factory delegates, held in Hyde, last week, to consider the extension of the Saturday half-holiday in factories, the employment of married women in mills was strongly denounced. If working men will themselves take this matter up, and also demand that the houses in which they live shall be made fit for habitation, a happier future is in store for their class.

OUR "STRANGER" AT THE CITY COUNCIL.

FIRST VISIT.

THE Manchester newspapers of Thursday, 10th November, contain a report of the first meeting of the City Council since the elections. In that report you may read the names of the speakers, study their utterances, ponder over the awful crime which was enacted—the third election of Alderman Grave to the distinguished but expensive honour of mayoralty. And yet who shall say, after reading the newspaper report, that he has a real, or even a partial impression, of what actually took place? Language is not confined to words, and a man's name printed in a newspaper only conjures up a very indefinite idea of the man himself. It is not so much what a person says, as how he says it. The clown tells the pantaloon to put the red-hot poker into his breeches pocket in the most natural tone of voice in the world; but he accompanies the words with a nod of mischievous expectation to the audience which at once throws a suspicion upon his sincerity. Newspaper type tells no tales, and the speeches of Mr. Gladstone and of Mr. Charley, in the House of Commons, are printed side by side with Rhadamanthine impartiality. Yet, who shall say that he understands the genius

of any meeting, of any conversation, from merely reading these cold, inhuman columns of printed matter? There are dulcet tones in Mr. Abel Heywood's voice which no shorthand can reproduce; there is a profound feeling of misery in the bosoms of his actual hearers which no mere luxurious newspaper reader can have any idea of. Newspaper reporters are notoriously the most cynical, the most heartless, the most morose body of men in existence. At a comparatively tender age their belief in human nature is destroyed by constantly hearing men make public speeches, and observing that the worst speakers are the vainest orators. No one ever saw a reporter over five-and-twenty smile at jokes which convulse a whole assembly, or twitch his face amidst the loudest uppoar. Like an unerring machine, he sits there; he hears the words that fall from the lips, and he repeats them on paper with the fatal accuracy of a photograph, which reproduces the hard, cold outlines, but omits the colour, the bloom, and the variegated light.

No one who did not see as well as hear, could, from reading the newspapers, realize the last council meeting, and arrive at a just idea of the relative importance of the speeches. For instance, in the report, Mr. Abel Heywood's speech occupies the largest space. Now, if you merely read it in the paper, you would think that it was listened to with the utmost attention and delight, that the laughter which in one or two places interrupted the speaker, was of the heartiest character, and that if he was not much cheered, it was because the audience feared to lose a single word. There is absolutely nothing in the printed report to indicate the angry passions, the impatience, the weariness, the open rebellion which Mr. Abel Heywood's speech excited. The busy, incorruptible reporters take no notice of the audience; all their senses slumber, excepting the quickened sense of hearing. They do not see Mr. Abel Heywood's speech reflected in the looks, the behaviour, the murmurs of his victims. They do not note the significance of the Town Clerk's studied inattention. They do not observe the new councillor, Mr. Fox Turner, as he reclines like a legislative Adonis. They do not catch the unctuous eyes of Alderman Watkin, as he rolls those orbits up towards the gallery, more in pity than in anger, and appeals to the strangers whether this is not really too much of a good thing. Why cannot shorthand reporters be more observant, and why cannot newspapers be more truthful? They put in the cheers and the laughter; why cannot they tell us in brackets in the course of a speech at what point the Town Clerk left the room, or Alderman Watkin make faces, or Mr. Fox Turner fell sound asleep, and so on. The feeble attempts they do make to animate the speeches with (cheers) and (laughter) and (hear, hear), are very useless and often deceitful. What kind of laughter was it, and what kind of cheers? There is no sentiment, from turbulent joy to the bitterest despair, which a man cannot express in a laugh; and as to cheers, there is nothing so discomfiting as a good round cheer from your delighted opponents. We were present at the last council meeting, and on the following morning we were so much struck with the discrepancy between the lively assembly and the cold and colourless report of it in the newspapers, that we determined to report it ourselves, in a new and improved style.

A few minutes before twelve, the scene in the Council Chamber is like the re-assembling of a boys' school, when every boy is crammed with holiday adventures, which he is energetically confiding to his neighbour. The usher, Sir Joseph Heron, sits apart, and has not yet sought to establish his authority. There are several new boys this half, and they stare about, and don't know what to do with their hats, and take no part in the first day's doings. Twelve o'clock strikes; the usher's voice is heard, and school has commenced. Then one of the old boys rises and repeats his carefully-prepared lesson. It is Alderman Watkin, who proposed the re-election of Alderman Grave. The motion is seconded by Councillor Ashton, who, in the course of his remarks, says that he should be glad if some Mayor would have the moral courage to do away with "mayoral hospitality." Good heavens! what are we coming to when a man can rise at a Council meeting, and quietly propose to dash down from before the very eyes of his fellow-councillors a course of generous dinners? Where is your spirit, gentlemen—where is your chivalrous devotion to your old institutions? A man must have something to cling to in these revolutionary times. We have seen the Irish Church shattered to its base; we have seen the sacred monoply of Royal German intermarriages rudely broken. These things are gone for ever; and we will waste no more tears over them. But, like an ark floating high upon the waves of a deluge, there yet remains an institution more ancient and more admirable than any of these, and to it we desire to cling. We repeat that a man must have something to cling to, and, for our part, we desire to cling to the Mayor's dinner table. The *City News* reminded us last week that the ill-temper which has been manifested in the Salford Council is said to be due to the absence of mayoral hospitality in that borough during the last two years. There cannot be any doubt about it. Those Salford gentlemen, who have not had a good dinner for two whole years, come to the meetings on empty stomachs, and they quarrel, as hungry men always will quarrel. We make no insinuations, but Councillor Ashton is a fat man, and, for anything we know, his medical adviser has forbidden him mayoral hospitality. And so not feeling the moral courage to stay away as long as these dinners are given, he wishes to place himself out of the reach of temptation and additional weight, by abolishing them altogether. Let us tell you, sir, that true moral courage consists not in abstaining from giving dinners, but in abstaining from eating them. In the hands of a clever man, good dinners are powerful aids to faith in him, and to the diplomatic management of his colleagues. Occasions will arise when it is necessary to persuade half-a-dozen obstinate men, who may be perfectly right, that they are really quite wrong. What does a clever Mayor do? Does he buttonhole them in the lobbies of the Town Hall? Does he get the Town Clerk to put the question before them in sixteen different lights? Nothing of the sort. Sixteen different lights did we say; sixteen different courses we mean. Yes, he invites them to dinner, and gives them sixteen courses, and if the entrées are passable, and the claret is sound, we will back that dinner against the most persuasive speech, and the most convincing arguments in the Council.

But to return to the Council—or, as we have called it, the boys' school. As in all large schools, you may observe, sitting on one of the forms, one boy who is different from the rest. He is probably a ward in chancery. He has been here almost ever since the school was founded, and his guardians never fetch him away. He is no longer a boy like other boys. He does not join in their horseplay; he does not care for raspberry tarts; he is a kind of pupil teacher. His name is supposed to be Mr. Abel Heywood; and the other boys look upon his classical attainments (especially his familiarity with Tacitus) with a kind of side-long awe. Once upon a time—just eleven years ago, when he was only a precocious boy, and not a ripe scholar—he, in the midst of class, surprised the other boys with a pungent misquotation from a profound Latin author. Even the usher was puzzled—although, of course, he did not show it. The whole school burst out laughing, and asked Abel where he cribbed it from. He replied, with the sneer of superior wisdom, "If you fellows had read your Tacitus you wouldn't need to ask."

And now, when Councillor Ashton sits down, and the mayor, with the bashfulness of a bride at her third wedding, is waiting in an ante-room to be led to the altar, up rises Mr. Abel

Heywood, like the Fairy Spiteful at a wedding instead of a christening, and shrieks out her odious forebodings. You remember the Fairy Spiteful in the fairy tale. Need we describe her again? Need we remind you that she is gaunt and pale-faced; that her voice is shrill; that her hair is dark and matted into elflocks, which her nervous movements jerk over her eyes; that one hand rests upon her Grecian bend, and that two fingers of the other are held up to emphasize her vixenish threats? She says that she has been at two previous third weddings, and that the brides on both those occasions have confided in her that their third nuptials were the most unpleasant of the three. She therefore predicted, on the present auspicious occasion, that the bride would repent in haste, being thus married at leisure. She said that it was not fair to the other virgins present that one matron should be married three times, while many of them remained single all their days. And when the Fairy Spiteful ceased speaking, there was a dead silence, as of terror, and all the wedding guests breathed more freely. The nuptials therefore took place; and Alderman Whittington is thrice Mayor of Manchester.

But, Mr. Reader, you will say that this is indeed a new, but not an improved style, of reporting. What is all this jumble about Fairy Spitefuls, Sancho Panzas, Dick Whittingtons, and the rest? We can hardly tell you. If we had left the Council after the Mayor's speech, all might have been different. But we lingered behind while the councillors scrambled for the committees, and the confusion, the riot, and the noise were such that they jumbled all the previous proceedings into one fevered dream.

MANCHESTER DINNERS.

2.—SHILLING DINNERS.

THE difficulty of "dining" in Manchester is one of those many things which experience alone can teach, for we have heard a Londoner exclaim, on a first visit to our city, "What capital dinners you get here, and so reasonable, too." But he was provided, we imagine, with spectacles *couleur de rose*, since we say again, and those who have wandered as we have in search of a meal will agree with us, that there is great, very great, difficulty in "dining" in Manchester at a reasonable price. But though it is so difficult to "dine," in the proper sense of the word, in Manchester, it is an easy matter to find places in which to "eat." And you may "eat" to repletion, too, without very much trouble or very much money; but the present system of bolted mid-day dinners (for want of another word), is as much opposed to true dining as swallowing oysters at the side of a coster's barrow is opposed to a fish dinner at "Simpson's." We suppose the short time allowed by employers to the employed for the mid-day meal is responsible for this, since the rush of clerks *et hoc genus omnes* to the restaurants at well nigh one and the same time, effectually prevents either proper preparation, proper serving, or proper mastication of the food provided, and the speedy rush back to business as effectually prevents digestion of the food so liable to harm them in itself.

In our last we treated of very cheap dinner-rooms. Now, we purpose going a step higher, and commence our journey at the Alexandra in Oldham street. This building was originally intended for dining-rooms for warehousemen and clerks, but after a short, and we presume, unsuccessful career, it changed hands, and became the Alexandra, the home, *par excellence*, of shilling dinners. The establishment is on a most extensive scale, embracing large dining-room, and a spacious chop and coffee-room, on the first floor; ladies' room, and smoke-room on the next floor. Each of these four rooms is well-lighted, well-ventilated, clean, cheerful, and of good size. A shilling here is indeed the magic coin. For it you can procure a plate of fish and meat, with vegetables and bread; or, you can have soup and meat; or, again, you can have meat and sweets—all these too *a la carte*. Variety enough here, surely. The soup is of the average quality, the same as to quantity. The fish looked good—a look contented us. The meat was excellent. The cook had evidently learned the secret of roasting (not baking) a joint without extracting all the juices for that mysterious and awful compound termed "gravy." It was certainly of the best we remember partaking of in Manchester. The potatoes were capable of improvement, and the cauliflower, having regard to the quality and quantity, too dear. Everyone who goes to the Alexandra should, as a mere matter of duty, after he has finished his meat, call for a college pudding. To attempt to give its composition is far beyond our daring, since one minute you imagine the groundwork to be apples, the next suet, then bread, then carrots, and then—but it is all of no use, you only go on guessing until the pudding is finished. We remember on one occasion greatly fearing for the health of a friend who would insist on having three of these "colleges" at one sitting. As it was, his condition was by no means to be envied. The Alexandra cheese has a decided Yankee twang, and a little goes a long way. From this our readers will see the possibility of getting a really economical dinner, worth all the money, and he will have the advantage of being waited upon by remarkably civil waitresses. A scarcity of bills of fare is noticeable, and the objectionable feature is the cutting up of the various meats in the dining-room. At least a screen is possible. The smoke-room upstairs is very comfortable, and is well supplied with newspapers, chess, and draughts.

Leaving Oldham Street and proceeding down Market Street, we soon arrive at New Brown Street. The traveller along this street will be attracted by a bewildering array of mirrors of all sizes, placed at all angles, at the entrance to a cellar on his right hand. This is the entrance to the "Shades." Ominous, yet fitting name! We will enter, but this is a thing requiring a little practice to enable it to be done quietly and properly. We remember entering the Shades for the first time, when our fixed impression was that the world had suddenly become possessed of at least a dozen *fac similes* of ourself, who were all advancing on us at once to dispute our right to our own individual body, style, and title; but proceeding onwards we found ourselves at length welcomed by the smiling face of a waitress, who showed us into a cosy little room on the right, and quietly awaited our commands. The dinner at the Shades is scarcely a shilling dinner, and perhaps ought not to have been mentioned. The way the charges are manipulated is, in fact, rather curious. Take a bowl of soup or a plate of fish by itself and you are charged eightpence; take what is called a "small plate" of meat, of any kind, and you are charged (we think) ninepence or tenpence; but take both fish or meat, or soup and meat, and the aggregate sum to be paid is fifteen pence. In the former proprietor's time a shilling was the charge for the dishes down to the period of the cattle-plague, when an advance was made to fifteen pence; and although the cattle-plague has long been a thing of the past, the fifteen-penny rate remains unaltered. Whether this is the fault of the butchers or not we are unable to say. On the occasion of our visit for the purpose of these sketches, the fish, at least a sole, was excellent. The poultry is also toothsome, whilst the meat is just about the average. The sweets are good, cheese middling, and celery—well, the celery we won't say anything about. The napery is white, and the appearance of the tables pleasantly tidy. The tumblers are worthy of a place in a museum of manufactures, as specimens of the manufacture of glass in its infancy; or they would make capital weapons of offence or defence, since for clumsiness and weight we have never seen their equals.

The Merchants' Dining and Coffee Rooms, in Market Street, offer an extensive choice to the hungry hunter. As at all the other shilling dinners, the would-be diner here selects for himself, from a bill of fare, his dinner; and he cannot complain at anyrate of the quantity of the dishes awaiting his patronage. The soups here are sixpence, the game eightpence and tenpence, the fish sixpence and eightpence, and poultry tenpence and a shilling. The rest of the dishes vary from sevenpence to elevenpence. The bill of fare stated the price of roast fowl to be tenpence, and potatoes a penny, which together, make elevenpence, we think? Judge then, of our surprise, when thirteenpence was demanded; the same too, with the meat, which is marked ninepence, inclusive of bread and vegetables, but which was charged tenpence. We should not have objected to either charge, but confess we were unable to make the proprietor's arithmetic agree with the proverbial Cocker.

In many respects resembling the Merchants', is the "Silver Grid," dining rooms, a few doors off. These dining rooms take their name from a huge gridiron (of steel, instead of silver), suspended over a fire,

just inside the door, on which innumerable chops and steaks are made ready for the hungry. Very excellent morsels we have proved them to be. But could good meat, well-cooked, be otherwise? The dining room is partitioned off into small boxes, each capable of holding four persons comfortably, and each made cheerful by a mirror. Very clean was everything here, and the waitresses obliging. A small plate of fish and meat is a shilling, or a bowl of soup may be substituted for the fish for the same money. The dinner we had was of the ordinary quality, remarkable for nothing. Here the prices marked opposite the dishes on the bill of fare, include vegetables and bread, and no attempt is made to obtain more.

Another dining room in the same neighbourhood as the two preceding is "Spence's," a little lower down Market Street. These dining rooms are made out of a succession of cellars, which give a view from the bar somewhat as if you were looking through a telescope from the wrong end. But the result is eminently satisfactory, the rooms being spacious and comfortably fitted-up with a number of small tables. A want that ought to be immediately supplied is a number of bills of fare, for it is extremely unpleasant to have the contents of a bill of fare jerked at you by an impatient waitress when you yourself are just a little particular in choice. A true Briton likes to be particular in his choice of dishes, but here one has no chance but to gasp out "roast beef," lean back until it comes, and trust to chance for that being good. We may just notice the nice-looking earthenware water-jugs and the little cobs of bread as worthy of a word of commendation. The cost of a plate of meat here, including potatoes and bread, and sweets afterwards, is a shilling.

Our next round will take us among the so-called restaurants, where prices are higher and the style somewhat more ambitious, and we shall communicate the results of our experience in due course.

MANCHESTER PATRONS OF ART.

MANCHESTER has a reputation for patronizing the fine arts, or in other words, for buying big pictures and giving big prices for them, and also for appropriating to itself fine sculpture and rare articles of *vertu*. Scarcely a sale of any moment takes place without our reading of Mr. Agnew or his representatives having been present in the interest of some of our local connoisseurs, or of some particular gem having been removed to the precincts of our dusty city. The nation has once or twice been outbid by Manchester purchasers, and the public galleries have lost prizes in order that the walls of a Manchester merchant's habitation might receive additional lustre. One cannot help feeling rather proud of this sort of thing, and even if we, individually, have never in our lives given more than ten or twenty guineas, or even ten or twenty shillings, for a work of art, we are to some extent gratified by the reflection that the city of which we are part and parcel enjoys so enviable a distinction in this respect; just, in fact, as we feel proud of our Hallé's Concerts, our King Calvert's Shakesperian Revivals, or our Free Libraries, and as we shall doubtless one day feel proud of our Owens University. Most towns have this kind of local patriotism, if we may so express it. In our case, it is doubtless to some extent a sort of protest against cockney impertinence. But to whatever source we trace the feeling we undoubtedly are proud of our reputation for patronizing the fine arts.

It is open to question, however, whether the fact that the villas and "palatial dwellings" surrounding Cottonopolis contain many a work of rare genius, can be regarded as clearly evidencing a great advance of refinement amongst us. The visitor, with æsthetic tastes, who approaches the City of Manchester by any of the railways, will scarcely be disposed to pronounce us, at first-sight, to be either a picturesque or artistic people. He usually comes to the very opposite conclusion. Sailing along, for instance, over that sea of delightful dwellings which stretches on either side of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire, or of the Lancashire and Yorkshire, or even of our end of the Bowdon line, his anticipations are generally of a lugubrious cast. Nor, as a rule, does he change his opinion when he begins to promenade our most public thoroughfares. That we are a practical people the paving-stones at least assure him; he can't observe those admirable small sets, just large enough for a horse's hoof to grip, without doing us that justice. And, perhaps, if he manages to keep away from impetuous Irwell and his Ethiopian brides, he may retain the conviction. but when he inspects our buildings he will say that we are rich—doubtless; architectural—scarcely. Perhaps never has there been so much money spent this way, with so little to show for it, as in the City of Manchester. The mischief of it is, that when we do put up a noble building, somebody is sure to go and spoil it by erecting some kind of half-fledged monstrosity next to it. The further mischief of it is that you can't prevent this. If the supposed visitor continues his walk to the inhabited part of the city, his impressions concerning our love for the beautiful won't be improved. He will probably remark that we are fond of display. To say nothing of rows of shops and houses looking very much as if the land had a habit of sneezing, and other rows with Sham and Jerry emblazoned on their very faces, he will see a number of churches and chapels, somewhat pretty, but quite spoiled by vulgar adornment, and a vast number which are entirely ugly.

But to return to our special subject. The gentlemen who have earned for the city the reputation of patronizing the fine arts may be divided into three classes. Firstly, there is the man who knows nothing whatever about art, but everything about artists. His love of the beautiful is expressed and contained in a fascinating regard for those symbolic marks which appear in the corner of a picture. To Shakespere's well-known question, "What's in a name?" he replies, "Everything." He worships names. The word "Cox," or "Turner," or "Philip," is more to him than the most ravishing landscape or charming scene that was ever painted. Place him before a marvel of beauty—be it man or maiden, sea, or land, or sky—he ducks down to the corner of the canvass, and if that does not satisfy him, you may use the picture for packing material for aught he cares. Place him before a wretched daub, and he will buy it—provided the emblem is well drawn. He is a non-professional picture-dealer. The difference between him and the professional dealer is, that the latter is to some extent a judge of pictures—the former only of sign-writing. He is a sort of protectionist, who keeps up the price of the works of dead artists, and keeps down the price of those of living ones. He buys simply because, having money in hand, he knows that he can shortly sell again at a higher price. Through his agency great prices are sometimes paid for great works; but he only gets the money—not art, nor the artist. He is usually either a speculative stockbroker, or a successful merchant, or a hard-fisted trader. It is scarcely just to look upon such a man as a patron of the fine arts. A large number of the pictures, however, whose arrival here we hail with pride, are purchased by this class.

The next specimen may be not quite so ignorant a creature as the last. He is fond of display and magnificence. He buys pictures not for the purpose of selling them again, but because he likes to be surrounded by fine things. If he is a merchant his warehouse is imposing—or, at least, not paltry—having clean windows and a doorway unlike the entrance of a prison. His house is stately and well-furnished, and his grounds are beautifully laid out. Indeed, he has everything about him as nearly superb as it can be. Whether he can tell fine art when he sees it, or has any discernment for genius, may often be doubted. Booksellers have told us that, occasionally, when a man is furnishing a new house—which house must of necessity contain an apartment termed "The Library"—he gives one of them a commission to stock the shelves with the "usual" books. We shrewdly suspect that, by the class we are describing, pictures and statuary are often bought on a similar principle. Mr. Agnew would be able to settle this point. But whether the men of whom we are writing are gifted with taste and judgment or not, they certainly have many noble works in their possession. The anomaly about them is that, though they may be surrounded by the True and the Beautiful, you shall, in the principal relations of their lives with other men, and in their chief actions, discover little or nothing that is either true or beautiful. In business they shall be mean, even dishonest, hard-hearted, and treacherous. Their warehouses shall be seminaries for instilling slavishness, and falsehood, and all un-English sentiments into youth; and their servants shall be wretchedly paid. Thus they shall be seen at Hallé's in the evening, breakfast amidst divine creations the next morning, and then drive down to the warehouse, talk like hypocrites, swear like troopers, and tell lies continually. Many of the works of art which come to Manchester fall into the hands of this class of patrons.

Lastly, there are one or two wealthy men for whom some of the big purchases we read about are intended, and who are the buyers of many of the smaller purchases of which we don't read; men who love genius and delight in serving it, and are in their lives and actions constantly exemplifying what truth and beauty is to them. It is by these that true art is recognized and disseminated, and unknown merit discovered, encouraged, and rewarded. To this class we must add those humbler brethren who, in their way, serve the same good; the mechanic who prizes the little sketch hung on his parlour-wall; the clerk who treasures the photograph of the lovely glen which pleased him most during his last short summer's trip; the student who gains fresh hope and inspiration from his little statuette. We knew a man who was almost educated by a sixpenny cast, and another who kept alive a sacred flame of earnestness by a daily study of a ten shilling print of one of Ary Scheffer's works. After all, these are the only true patrons of the arts; at least the only real or lasting good to truth, or art, or, beauty—call it what you will—emanates from this class.

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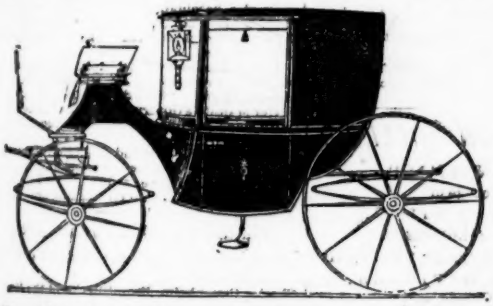

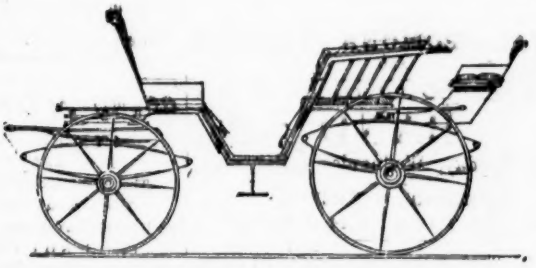

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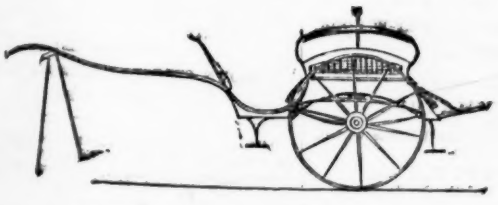

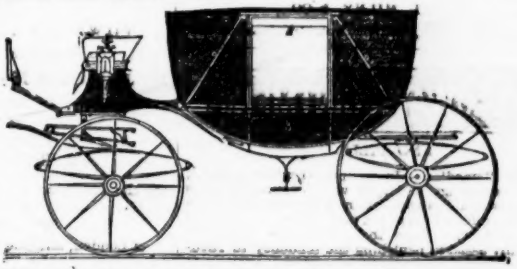

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